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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000407

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV PINR I2

SUBJECT: RAIDS AND RANSOMS: UNIFORMED MEN SPREAD FEAR IN
BAGHDAD'S ADHAMUYAH DISTRICT

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Residents of Al-Adhamiyah District in Baghdad told Poloff, February 8, that several organized raids had taken place over the past few months in which uniformed men had taken family members from their homes at night. Many of their family members, they said, were ransomed for release, and, in one case, were later found dead at the morgue. Residents appeared to be fearful to reveal who they believed was behind these abuses, but their statements pointed to Iraqi security forces. Many residents requested private interviews with Poloff saying that they were too afraid to give details in front of others. Due to the time constraints on the red zone visit, Poloff was unable to do so, but is following up on these requests. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Poloff met with 15 individuals who claimed that their family members had been picked up in raids by groups they believed to belong to Iraqi security forces. Thekayat Ahmed from the Sabakhar neighborhood said that early in the morning on June 3, her section of the neighborhood was cordoned off while several house raids were performed resulting in the extraction of 11 individuals, including her husband, Osama Salman Abdul Hadi.

¶3. (C) Thekayat said these individuals, who were dressed in camouflage-type uniforms, ransacked her home, put a gun to her head, and took her husband. She added that she had not seen or heard from her husband since then, and that family members of those taken from their homes were later contacted to pay \$4,000 in ransom for their release. A second female participant who would not identify herself or her husband, confirmed this story, adding that the people who took away her husband in that same raid all drove the same blue and white vehicles, reminiscent of police vehicles.

¶4. (C) Another woman who identified herself as Hannan Abbas said that at 6 am on September 4, another sectioned-off raid of Sarafiyah neighborhood had occurred with nine people removed from their homes. Hannan said the group wore dark green uniforms and drove red and white vehicles with no license plates. Hanan said that the family members were later called for a ransom which some paid. Days later, she said, two of the nine kidnapped individuals were later found dead at the local morgue.

¶5. (C) Others at the table told similar stories of raids/ransoms. One elderly gentleman, who did not identify himself, said his son was taken in a separate raid and claimed that he too was called for a ransom. Unlike the others, however, he was able to see his son who he said appeared safe. This gentleman said he paid US \$1,700 for the right to visit his son in a detention facility.

¶6. (C) Comment: Given the time constraint for this red zone visit, PolOff was unable to collect full data on these allegations. What was most evident was the palpable fear that these residents exhibited. The residents appeared very jittery and spent a substantial amount of the conversation conveying to Poloff their fears of retribution for sharing details) in some cases saying that they would prefer that no follow-up be conducted for fear of what would happen to their family members. Poloff assured residents that all information was confidential and offered to meet with residents individually to pursue further details. PolOff will follow up on these reports.

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